

Lecture 17
Desire in the Rocks

Good morning. Let us now continue our discussion of Mahesh Anj Kanjwal's next play. Which, which is not reflections. Which is actually called, 'Desire in the Rocks'. So the next play that we discuss is called, 'Desire in the Rocks', and not Reflections. Now Desire in the Rocks, I chose this play, because there is a continuity, a thematic continuity between, the audio play, we discussed Garbo and Desire in the Rocks. Let us, you know, first, look at, what is the major theme of this play is, in terms of the fact that, in Garbo, if you would remember, our discussion of Garbo. There was an attempt by Intoke, the professor in the play, to construct Garbo as, in his own ideal, you know, he wants to actually, construct, you know, Garbo's soul as, the place of his own lost and frustrated aspirations and so the woman is being constructed as an ideal. Something that will be a repository of the man's, the professor's lost and frustrated aspirations, source of everlasting hope. Something that will immortalize him, the man. And you see something similar happening in the, Desire in the Rocks, where again, the unconscious, in terms of sexuality, in the play. You know, serves as a, some kind of a resistance. And this is of course, Shomick Bondapiahas introduction to Mahesh Anj Kanjwal's collected plays. Where he, very accurately, phrases the popular, I mean, defines the, theme of the play. As a case, where, the unconscious, in terms of sexuality serves as a resistance to both the behavior and expression, frozen into fixed institutionalised meaning. And in this case, in the, in Desire in the Rocks, you have an artist as the main character. You had a professor in, Garbo and in Desire in the Rocks; you have an artist, who is one of the main characters of the play. And here the artist is the one, who's unconscious, becomes a sight for a drama. A drama between, the unconscious creative impulses, to create a new kind of a, a social order, perhaps. Some kind of a new expression, which would be completely, you know, which, would rebel, against, social and moral norms. The moral norms, the moral institutionalised social meaning. Right, so, you, so the, the unconscious itself, in terms of sexuality serves as, resistance, Shomick Bondapiahas's to both behavior and expression, frozen into fixed, institutionalised, meaning. Probing, provoking the artist, in his quest for creative fulfillment. And which then turns the woman, into an embodiment of his desire. In the process also destroying her, even as he cuts himself, free of her.

Now, we'll, we'll, we'll, this, this, this, this idea will become clearer, once we discuss the, the, the, the very meager plot of the play. In the play you have two major characters, Hemakanth and Lalitha and also you have five women, who are, minor characters in the play. Five women who are from the neighboring village. And Lalitha has spent, most of her life, all her life, in a stone mansion. You know, you know, wooden mansion, not a stone mansion, a wooden mansion. And her brother, Hemakanth, has returned after fifteen years, from having spent his life, in Europe, as a travelling person, who has, deprived himself of all comforts, he leads a very poor life, travelling in the, for the sake of trying to find out, trying to find, you know, an artistic, you know, trying to make his fortunes, in the field of art. So, so, he's, he struggles and he is still struggling. But he has completely, you know, given up on all social ties. He, he relinquishes, you know, his privileged childhood, his privileged upbringing, all for the sake of art, an artistic expression. So, and Lalitha on the other hand has spent, you know, who's much younger to, she's fifteen years younger to Hemakanth. She has spent all her life, in trapped, in a wooden mansion. And her adopted father, Dada Shahib, will also abandons the mansion, in, in pursuit of this own education. And there is a belief that there is a sin on the, on that, that, the, the generations of people who have lived at the mansion, have been cursed. Because the mansion itself rests on the body, on the bodies of a beggar woman and her child. And it's the only, you know, wealthy, you know, symbol of elite culture, elite society in, in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by fields and, and the village. And so the space of the mansion itself becomes quite symbolic, in terms of how insecure the foundations of this elite mansion are. Because its, its built on the remains of a beggar woman and her child. And there's a curse on the lineage of the very

generations of people, who had lived there. Because, apparently no one has, ever managed to, you know, have their own child. Every, Everytime, a child was born, it would, it died and so there was this, so every, every generation of parents, were compelled to, actually adopt a child. So all the children are adoptive, children. And Dada Shahib apparently also leaves the mansion, because he wants her, Lalitha to, to survive. So she doesn't, he doesn't want her to die and Hemakanth also abandons, his adoptive father and in search of his, his fortunes as an artist. But you know, much to the disapproval of his father, who doesn't want him to become an artist, considering they come from a very privileged Upper Caste background, that he cannot stand the fact, the thought of his son becoming an artist. So there is a, he rebels against his father and he leaves. And he, he's you know, leaves, leads a life of a wandering artist in Europe, while his sister, is trapped and taken care of by, an Aya, a Nani.

And, there are some other men who work in the house, who take care of her and but she's completely trapped. I mean she or, she's only seen her, her an old photo of Hemakanth, when he was a small boy and she hardly remembers him, because she was only just five years old, when her brother left the house. And the Aya also was dismissed from her work, for having, secretly shown her, the photo of her brother. So, she was grownup with absolutely no social ties, whatsoever. She's led a very protected but every lonely life in the mansion. And when Hemakanth comes back, the play begins with their reunion, after many years later. And its, its, you know, I would, I mean, anyone who rather play would, would think that, they're, they're lost lovers, who have been reunited. That's exactly what happens, because even though they're an adoptive brother, sister duo, there is this, this sexual passion, between them, which suggests that, the, the bond itself is illicit and incestuous. But, and this is actually what spells destruction on both the characters towards the end of the play. Now, Hemakanth is a very, skilled sculptor, right, and so he works with stone. The, their mansion is the only wooden structure in the entire space, while everything around them is, made of stone. They're, they're surrounded by rocks, with lots of rocks, it's a very rocky landscape. And, and so they're surrounded by stones and rocks and Hemakanth actually wants to capture, Lalitha's beauty and youth in, in his, stones sculptures. Right? And so, lot of the conversations that happened earlier on, in the various, there are about seven scenes, the play has been divided into seven scenes and every scene, you know, describes the building passion, between the two characters. Although, in, in many ways, Lalitha and Hemakanth are quite, different in, in the, in the, the, they're all, they're both isolated in their own unconscious desires for, for a, for the absolute, for, for, for transcending their own, individual isolation, their own lonely, lonely, loneliness, their own limitations. So, while Hemakanth wants to actually, express, Lalitha's youthful beauty in his artistic creations and in some sense, tries to also, you know, rise above himself through his art and, and there's a certain authoritarianism which is evident in both these characters. So, Lalitha wants to, is, is deeply in love with Hemakanth, although initially she's a bit scared to actually love, look at him or live him. I mean she's a, she's, she's a bit, she's rather terrorized at the prospect of loving Hemakanth in the dark. Especially, in the dark mansion and so she doesn't want to look at him, even as he, as he encourages her to look at him. And she is, she almost has this slaveless, slavish, obsessive love for Hemakanth, she doesn't want to let go off him and he's only one she has. So she is willing to do anything to, to have him.

But he maintains, an apparently, dispassionate, distance, attitude towards Lalitha. He doesn't, he's, he's completely engrossed, engaged in his, in his personal, private, individual life as an artist. And so, he doesn't really seem to reciprocate her feelings, her vulnerability. Right? And he seems rather guarded. He

doesn't want to actually get hurt, by his experience of love or his experience of life, he doesn't want to take responsibility, for anything. Much like the men in Garbo, who do not want to take responsibility for Garbo's unborn child. But they want to ensure that each one is the father of the child and thereby gain some kind of collective salvation, through the birth of a son. And here similarly you have an artist, Hemakanth, who, who's a, you know, in some sense, wants to, in his quest for fulfillment, turns the woman, in this case, Lalith, Lalitha, into an embodiment of his desire and in the process also destroys her and but also tries to cut himself free of her. Right? So you create an object, called, 'Woman', which you idealize and you embody, who's an embodiment of your own desire and in this case, the sculptor also makes her, you know, actrophese, her flesh, her body, he, you know, the when in scenes, Hemakanth constantly asking Lalitha to, you know, assume different postures and different gestures, so that he can capture her raw, vital passion in his stone scriptures. But, you know, in the process of doing that, he also isn't really interested in, in her as a person, you know, he's not interested in her feelings, he doesn't reciprocate her feelings. And he's not interested in her mind. For him, her body is the only reality that is apparent and that can be captured, in all his vitality, in his stone sculptures. He doesn't want to get too close to her. Right? He just wants her to be able to, you know, he, he almost sees his stones sculpture in her. It's almost as though he were, she were a living embodiment of his own artistic creations. And so, that in itself is a, you know, what draws him to Lalitha. He is also a very, he's unconscious, that takes the form of art, artistic creation. He has a very autocratic space. There's no room for anybody else, in his artistic creation. Right? It's, it's only him, and so the unconscious itself, the unconscious mind as, Shomick Bondapiahas there again says, in the introduction, 'The unconscious mind itself, is the sight of a drama, between the perverse and the ambulant nature of, of, of sexual impulses. In this case also, an incestuous born between, brother and sister. And, and the kind of oppressive, repressive, social norms that the mind, the heart, the unconscious internalizes. So you internalize certain social, cultural norms, that inform patriarchal society. But you're also rebels against these norms in, the, expresses this rebellion, against social norms, in the form of art. And the woman is an embodiment of this artistic endeavor and she also further the sight of this, this struggle between, you know, oppressive, social norms and the rebelliousness, the rebellion against, against those norms. Right?

So the woman remains the sight of both exploitation and domination, in this play. And towards the end of the, towards the middle of the play, we discovered that Lalitha has a, also bears Hemakanth's child and so she suddenly, she's, she who, she has been feeling rather left out and neglected, by Hemakanth, who has not been reciprocating, her her feelings and has been completely, you know, engaged, in, in, engrossed in his art, in his sculptures, that she, as it were almost taking revenge, says that, 'I've, I'm also an artist in my own right, I'm creating a child, I'm creating your child'. Right? And so she, but she gives birth to a, dead child. Right? So it's, it's, it's, it's, to her it seems like as though, she's expiating, for the sin she has committed of having an illicit relationship with her own brother, for which, she, she believe she's being punished and the only way, that she can actually, you know, expiate her, her sin, is to remain in the state of sin, as she says. So she now has this illicit child, but the child is born dead and it seems to realize or confirm the curse that has been placed on these generations or families who have lived in the wooden mansion, who, that, that, you will, they'll, they will never have a child of their own. Their lineage is always under the threat of being, annihilated exterminated. Right? And so the child that is born, is born dead and the child is sold to a beggar, who takes the child, for, for, for lot of money and then probably bury's the child. But there is this, and, and, when she, there's a scene also later on, where she meets the five women, in the village and she sees the child of one of, the new born child of, one of the women who has come to get the child, have the child blessed by the Goddess, in the temple and but, when the and so

she admires the child and she sings a beautiful song to the child, but when the other women come in, they are shocked and disgusted by the sight and they scold the woman for giving the child to Lalitha and they ask her to take the child back. Because they think that Lalitha is a curse, will be a curse to the child, because she's herself, you know, a sinner. A sinner, someone who has had a child out of an illicit union and so, they also think that she's a curse, she's a, she's a, she mark ill fortune for them, because she's, she has lived in a, she has lived in a mansion that has not seen any life.

So, so she's a, she's driven away and then the, you see also society in the form of the villagers who live around the mansion, you know, completely harassing her, stoning her and Hemakanth for, the life they've led, the ignoble life, the illicit life that they've led. And you know, Lalitha is reduced to, to tatters and now she has no choice, but to turn to prostitution to survive. And that is when, and then Hemakanth meets her, he's very upset and sorry to see her, in this state and he also undergoes a transformation when, his sculptures are destroyed, by the villagers. So, he has made, several stone sculptures, surrounding the mansion, but they're all destroyed by the villagers and that's when he realizes that, everything is fake. His own artistic creations are fake, the stone he thought was his medium, his beloved medium, is fake. It is not actually give him, an accurate representation of the feeling, the, the, the loving body. Right? The body which is not just a mere body, but also, is an embody, embodied, embodies a subject, who can feel, who can, who can love, who can care. And, and so it is not seem to be an authentic representation of the embodied self and so it is destroyed and that's when he realizes that he, he identifies with, Lalitha's own pain, of having given birth to a dead child and now he realizes what must feel like to be an artist, who has created something, that is dead, that is lifeless. And, so, he thought that he could actually embody Lalitha in all her vitality in her, in all her authenticity, through stone, in his own stone sculptures, but that is what exactly he fails to do, by the end of the play. And so, the two characters end up, you know, you know, being trapped in their own mutually destructive passion. But that, that initially took the form of artistic creation, as the embodiment of the rebellion, against social norms. But then of course ends up destroying itself in the process. Now let's just go to some of the specific passages in the play, that will give you a better sense of how, the, the, of the thematic shifts in the play.

So if you look at the first scene of *Desire in the Rocks*, you have a description of the reunion of between Hemakanth and Lalitha after many years, there is this, deep sense of longing that, Lalitha has for Hemakanth, when she sees him and she's happy to see that there is a, there's at least one person in this world, whom she recognizes and she's just happy to have anyone, especially Hemakanth to you know, redeem her lonely life. So, so we learn in the initial scene that Dada Shahib, the adopted father, had left all this will, all his property in, to Lalitha, but she has no right over the property, because, it's the trustees of the house, who manage the property. Right? So, she is quite powerless in the house. And initially, initially, Lalitha is quite, terrified. I mean, she is, she's gotten for used to living alone in the dark house, that, she's not used to the presence of a man, in the same house. And you know, it's probably this deep sense of isolation and loneliness, that enables her to eventually, open up to Hemakanth and, and completely surrender herself to him. She's willing to offer, everything that she has to him, in exchange for some love and comfort. And so she doesn't seem to be concerned with the fact that, he is her brother after all. So she is, she is, she just wants to be happy, she wants to be, she wants to share her life with someone. And she, later remembers him, recognizes him, as her brother. She only, she, she had only seen, she was five years old, she was wearing pink frock, as Hemakanth remembers. Hemakanth remembers her and say's that, 'I remember a fair skin girl, five years old, wearing a pink frock, watching me from behind the Aya's pallu. That's the memory, he had of her. So when she five, he was twenty and he remembers her,

from that time. And Lalitha remembers being scared of him and she still seems to be little terrorized, by the possibility of having to love someone, in the dark, in the dark house. And she's not able to actually, entirely, open up to her, to him initially, she can only remember her lonely days in, in the house. She remembers the huge portrait of their Mother who died earlier. She also remembers this, the, the old photograph of Hemakanth, when he was a small boy, that the Aya had secretly shown her. She, she remembers living in a, in a room of her own, with all other rooms of the mansion locked, even the, for the servants, were forbidden to enter the room. And the Aya, who had shown this, the boy, the photo of the boy secretly to her, loses her job.

So she's completely trapped in that mansion. Hemakanth also reveals, tells her that, he had been, you know, wandering through alien lands, through Europe, starving, driven by a single obsession, art. And that he completely fought against the bitter cold, with nothing, but rags on my back. Not once did I think the comforts of this place. So he has given up all the privileges of the comfortable lifestyle, in the palace, and of the place, in the mansion and he has left everything for art. He left of his own free will, he says. And much against the, the anger and his approval of his father, who does not wants his son to become, an artist. And so, from the very beginning, Hemakanth appears to be, someone who is absolutely, detached and dispassionate about life. He's only concerned about his own artistic creation. And Hemakanth now initially, wants Lalitha to be his, muse, his inspiration, for his artistic endeavors. And so, if you see, say, initial, several moments in the play, where he's trying to, I mean, it's not like as though he's lie, he's in love with her, but he wants her to assume different postures. So that he can capture her youth and her vitality, in his sculptures. And Lalitha in some sense, misunderstands that and she mistakes his, attention for love and desire. So he tells Lalitha, that, 'Let me, let me call you 'Queen' or 'Laaly' or whatever else, I want to, I love you, come to me'. Lalitha, 'Why'? Hemakanth, 'I'm going to carve you in stone'. Lalitha, 'Me'? Hemakanth, 'Yes', Lalitha, 'Why'? Hemakanth, 'Because you're ravishing and because I love you', Lalitha, 'Don't', Hemakanth, 'Why not'? Lalitha, 'Don't carve me in stone,' Hemakanth, 'What'? Lalitha, 'I'll be imprisoned in them forever', Hemakanth, 'You would become immortal'. My father, my hands, will carve will carve you in these rocks and my hands too would become, immortal with you. Right? So the intention here, Lalitha seems to already anticipate to Hemakanth's intention to freeze, petrify, Lalitha, in his sculptures. So he's not responding to her, the, the emotions, the heart, that lies beyond the body. Right? The woman who is yearning for company and for comfort and for love. But he is more drawn to, her desiring self. Right? Which he didn't want to capture, in his sculptures. Right? So he's not interested in desiring her, but he's more entranced, drawn to desiring self. Right? And that's exactly what he's trying to capture in his sculptures. And Lalitha does not want to be imprisoned, by his sculptures. And she constantly say's, it would be a sin. 'It would be a sin, for me, for my soul, to be naked before you. Right? Your eyes would see all of me, your ho, your hands will mould me, that can't happen. I feel it's a sin', she says.

And so, the very act of capturing his sister, in a sculpture, would require her to be exposed and vulnerable and she does not want to be, vulnerable to, her own brother. Right? And she thinks that it's a sin. Right? That it would be a sin, it would be a realization of a curse that has been placed their family, for her to be then, stripped, metaphorically stripped, before her own brother and become this object, of an artistic creation. But the artistic creation, the art, art itself is not a form of sublimation for Hemakanth. Hemakanth does not, does not manage to channelize his desire and love for Lalitha into art. Art becomes more away of actrofene the skin, the body, of Lalitha, in the play. Right? So she's just transformed, translated, into a stone sculpture. And it's almost like as though, Hemakanth also has a very, erotic

relationship, with his own artistic, work. So It's not, you can't think of it as a, sublimation, where you will be able to transfer, your sexual, your libido, your sexual energy, from the object of your desire to, something else, like art. So he's constantly touching her, he, he touches her, on her head, he feels her beautiful, black, silky hair, which he wants to bring alive in his sculptures. And, but whenever Lalitha yearns for or longs for him, he recedes, he, he retracts. So it's, it's, it's a constant game, that Hemakanth seems to be playing, of one, one hand beckoning her, to assume certain postures, for him, to capture in his sculpture. But, you know, he always then withdraws, exactly at the moment, when she wants him to open up, to be vulnerable, to reciprocate her feelings. Right? So it's, it's a kind of sexuality which, Shomick Bondapiahas says, 'Never seems to accept itself on its own terms'. Right? It's, it's only treated another means, as a means to sculpting, yet another form. Right? So, any kind of sexual longing or desire that lit, Lalitha has for, Hemakanth, is only, being transformed or translated, transubstantiated into, the stone sculpture. Right? So, you never see, reciprocation, it's never a mutual act, it's the, you never, you never acquire a sense of, sexual identity between the two character. They remain rather, isolated and trapped within their own, autocratic worlds, where each seems to reign supreme. Right? So Hemakanth seems to reign supreme in his world of art, in which, there is, nobody else, has any space. Right?

He is the supreme and he is the only one there. He is willing to actually accept isolation; he's willing to give social ties, for the sake of art. And you have Lalitha, who's willing to, who opens up, who, who is willing to expose herself, who wants to be vulnerable, who wants to have Hemakanth, at any cost. But also, in the process ends up, being rather possessive and demanding. Right? So she is, slavish on one hand, she's willing to, she's, she's self abnegates herself, she's always, she, she almost seems, servile in her love for him and she's willing to do anything it takes for him, to reciprocate her love. And, but he, she also wants to, possess him and have him. Right? It's almost like, as though she is, competing for him, with his art. And of course, later on she also accuses Hemakanth of being, incapable of feeling, he's not an artist in the first place. He is a fake, he is a, he is an inauthentic and artificial artist, because he's incapable of feeling and loving. Right? So how can an artist, who's incapable of feeling and loving, capture, another person's feelings, capture her feelings, in the form a, stone sculpture? Right? So, she, she realizes very early on, that he is a dispassionate and unfeeling person. So, much as he wants to bring her to life, it's his unconscious, impulses, it's his unconscious, projections, onto Lalitha, which he then, actually wants to bring to life, through his sculptures. Right? So, she's just, she's just a merely an object of his own desire. Right? An embodiment of his own desire, which he then wants to transform into, stone art. But, she's always scared of being, trapped by his sculptures. She doesn't want to be trapped. She all, she already feels, trapped in that wooden mansion. Imagine being trapped and frozen in stone sculptures. So for Hemakanth, he says later on, much like what happened in Garbo, that the body seems to be the, only reality, it's not the mind nor the heart. It's the body, it's the manifest, physical body, which seems to be the only reality for, Hemakanth. Not what lies beneath or what accompanies the body. Right? It's not the mind. Right? So, when Lalitha brings up the mind, brings up the question of her own feelings, her own heart, he's not concerned. He says, 'Don't corrupt, the experience of the artist, the artistic experience'. Right? But for Lalitha, the sexual experience comes, with emotion. Right? With vulnerability. But it also comes with this, deep sense of possession, of wanting to possess or to rule over him. So there very various lines, which suggest Lalitha's, you know, slavish possessive, desire and love for Hemakanth. 'Look him, I've raised both my arms, now help me up'. 'You're cruel, stubborn, self-centered, selfish'. 'How sweet you are?' 'Cruel and sweet'. 'Him, what will you take to smile, a little?' 'Don't go without smiling, kiss me'. 'Soothe this excruciating pain and then he leave'. Then when he doesn't respond, to her attentions, again she says, 'Hem, I want into your eyes, deep into them, I will

become a tiny drop of blood and travel through your body, through your heart, brain, mind, soul'. 'I will talk to all your secrets, discover all your dreams, then I will turn in a tiny pupil and live in your eyes, will you let me'?

This is the other line, where she wants to become a part of him, she wants to internalize him, she wants him to internalize for her, so that they can become one. And she also takes at the authorship, she also claims, auth, authority and authorship over his, stone sculpture. She says, 'It hadn't been for me, these sculptures would not have existed. 'So you have to love me, I am the original, they are the replicas, they are the copies of me'. Right? So, but then he says, that she is absolutely substitutable. Right? If it had not been for her, then some other woman would have posed, for him. And that of course makes her feel rather, unloved and insulted. So she, she says, 'I say to those sculptures, 'Hello Lali, how are you? How do you feel out here in the sun'? Then she tells, she asks him, Hemakanth, 'Why did you make the sculptures outside the village, where it is deserted? Who will come to see them there'? Hemakanth, 'The whole world will come'. 'Are stone things to be kept in house, to destroy their beauty? They must stand in the open air. On hills, plains, I'm going to create a whole forest of sculptures, Lali. Lalitha, 'A forest of Lallies? See, how many images I've given you and look at you, you won't do one thing to please me'. And so this is constant back and forth, it's a constant drama, which is a struggle to, to achieve an absolute power over the other. This is passion, which is constantly, you know, dramatizing, this desire for absolute power over the other. So, Lalitha wants him all for herself. She feels neglected by and jealous of her, his works of art. She feels completely left out and you know, shut out from his artistic world, in which she seems to have no space and she wants him for herself. But she struggles, but she remains rather passive and passionate. Right? So she, for example, he's only interested in, so she, he, there's a moment where he asks her to, open her lips. Right? Because he wants to make a sculpture of her, with her lips slightly open. But she wants him to kiss her, on the lips. She wants him to feel her agony and feel the same agony. She wants, she says 'There, kiss my big toe, now the other toes', then he kisses them too. The foot', he does and she laughs out. 'Slave, Slave, you're a slave'. 'What shall I do'? 'What can I do for you'? 'I want to be your slave. Here kiss my hands and thumb'. He does. 'Fingers', he does. 'The palm', he does. 'Hands', he does. 'I'm going to faint'. So, obviously he's, he's, he's does not seem to be doing it, out of own volition. He's not doing it, because he loves her or desires her, because, he wants to be able to evoke through his presence and through his sculptures, the sense of deep passionate, send of longing that exists within, Lalitha. Then again she says, 'I will give you anything, to hear this over and over again'. Right? Because when she says, when he says, that she's beautiful.

She says, 'Hem, take me, take me mentality, take me in every place, every moment, here in the house, in the open, under crashing rain, with stabs of lightning burning above bodies, in the raging sun, on the hot, black ground, cracking with heat, under dense trees, dripping starlight, in mute profound darkness, in thick forests, on the banks of streams, on enormous boulders and so on'. And then, Hemakanth says, 'Yes, in all places, in at all times, I will take you in all your moods; I will store them in every drop of my blood and bring them alive again, in stone upon stone. Lali of the brimming, vulnerable eyes, Lali tossing from side to side with the exquisite pain of fulfillment. Lali of the full inviting lips. Lali of the breast, heaving with emotion. Lali of the naval, as deep as desire. Lali of the long, long, thighs trembling, with irresistible lust. I'm going to embed it, all in stone, the physical manifestations of pure desire, prime evil, elemental, the eternal beauty and vitality of women, the heavy light of passion, that surges and overflows through every pore of your body, will fill and flow out of every pore of my sculptures. The desire that palpitates in your every scene will be seen, breathing in my sculptures. This indestructible, eternal passion, can be

embedded only in another, indestructible, eternal thing, in my sculptures, in art. Right? So you see that Lali is only an ideal of desire, of his own, you know, unconscious desire and that what is actually been frozen and captured forever in art. And so he believes that his art will immortalize Lali and immortalize him. And that's the initial impression. But, Lalitha is actually extreme to solution. She realizes that he's not able to capture, what she, actually feels. She doesn't know, because she does not, he's, he doesn't allow himself to feel. He's too dispassionate and too detached, to be able to feel, her agony, her longing, her passion. So for Hemakanth, it's purely a physical experience, which has to be experienced in its purity. But for Lalitha, she's, she's unhappy. She's disappointed that, he's not able to capture her heart and her mind and her feelings for him. Again, in, in the middle of scene three; Hemakanth is very angry that, she's trying to control him. Right? And she says, 'You're making me pay a full price for it. You wanted to swallow my soul itself. You want to pluck my life and wear it in your hair. You want me to draw air, without your permission. I must accept, being imprisoned, within your sight. So, so it's almost as though that, she's now, the artist, who's trying to imprison Hemakanth, within her own love. Right? Almost, immortalize him, petrify him, through her love and her longing for him. Her desire to possess him.

Later on, in scene three, Lalitha berates Hemakanth for being, inhuman. And he says, she says that, 'How dare you behave like this? I gave you my all, without thinking twice. How dare you spit on it? You'll have to pay for it, one day. You will have pay the full price for this, one day. My rage won't go waste. My curse is on you. Don't laugh, don't hide your inadequacy under laughter'. This is after Hemakanth laughs at his, at her curse. 'Artist, indeed'. 'Artist, my foot'. You aren't even human, your body is filled, saw dust. And heart as lifeless as those, stones of yours. Spends entire day, chipping at those stones. You don't even have the skill of a mason in your hands. You're a mere stone breaker. But Hemakanth says, 'You're only good for that love stuff. Don't get into art and creation. It's beyond you'. And then she says, 'Where am I in your devoting statues, which you call, works of art?' Right? Not mine. Where am I in them? Where is Lali in them? They're all statues of shameless sluts, sitting in obscene postures. Lali is not a slut like them. Lali, who gives all of herself, is not like this, revolting, obscene. So supposedly, the play is actually complicating the whole idea of art, representing life. Right? Can art actually, represent life? Can life ever be, in all its complexities, in, its all, in all its ambiguities, is it able to, is it possible to capture life, in, in art? What does it mean to represent, something, accurately? She says, 'You have to be born a true human being'. 'I am true, my blood is true'. 'It's alive, its impulses are true, they're alive'. 'What can I not understand?' 'Do I not merit this much, having travelled through fire, burning everything, behind me? Why you're deceiving yourself? You know it yourself. That is why you sit staring your work for hours in despair'. Creation is not such a easy thing. Right? And so, that is when, when she, when he challenges her to create a sculpture, a poem, a song or a painting, she says that, 'I am going to have a baby'. Right? And she says, 'All women are greater than artists, because they feel, for the child, that they have created and they know what the child feels. Hemakanth thinks that she's trying to trap her, with this talk of Motherhood. She's a, she's trying to ask him to, take responsibility for his child, but then, he seems to be rather detached, even threatens to leave her and abandon her child. But she says 'My child needs you'. Right? 'And you also need him'.

And then in scene four, is that scene, the encounter between Lalitha and the women of the village, where she holds the child of one of the women and she sings the baby, a very beautiful song. But then, the other women are, disapprove of this meeting and they ask her to leave, because they think that she is, an evil woman and a curse woman, that who has had a sinful relationship with Hemakanth, who had borne a child out of wedlock and lives in a mansion that has been cursed for generations. Right? So they don't

want their child also to be cursed. It's in scene five, that Lalitha gives birth to a dead child and gives the child away, to a beggar and she believes that she has sinned for her relationship with Hemakanth and now she has to expiate her sins, by having a, an equally sinful, you know, being, you know, in a equally sinful profession. So she's upset that, she's lost her, her only child, who was born dead. And but she also feels that she's paying for her sinful relationship, by bearing a dead child. And despite the fact that, she loved her child as her own, but she could not bring it back to life. Again Lalitha here, believes that she has, she has to pay for having transgressed, social norms and social conventions. And so she decides to, get away, from the mansion and she wanders around for a long time and she ends up becoming a, prostitute. Right? While Hemakanth also realizes, also, also has undergone a transformation, because all his sculptures are destroyed and broken down by the villagers. And Lalitha is now shocked to see that Hemakanth also needs her. Right? She seems, he seems to have, you know and this is when on page 125, in the middle of scene six, Hemakanth tells Lalitha that these sculptures are not true and I am not true, either, I'm very false, it came to me suddenly, that night, when people were smashing them one by one. I was watching afar. The enraged mob was breaking the sculptures, limb by limb. Not once did I feel to rush into save them. I was so terrified, I ran for my life, afraid that they would take my life too. Finally I stopped somewhere. My head cooled down, then my mind stirred and posed the question, 'Why did you do that'? The answer was easy. I was a coward. I did not myself believe in, what I had created. Those sculptures were false. That is what they all are. Ugly, loathsome, I see them now.

Suddenly I am defeated Lali. Why? Why this has happened? I want to depict pure desire in all its aspects. But what came out is, mechanical, hideous, filthy, totally unconnected with what had been in my mind. Can there be these differences, between what the mind sees and the hand does? Why does this happen? Yet these naked statues are alive, their falseness is alive, their obscenity is alive, they look back at me tauntingly and say, 'We are yours, part of your blood, your mind, your life, you cannot deny us'. And I don't. There's no place, now I can leave my head. And now the first time, he identifies Lalitha's loss. He now realizes, what it must have like to you, to give birth to a dead child. Just like how, all his creations have been destroyed. And Lalitha says that, 'You only wanted to erect a wall around you, in self defense. You refused to get involved with life. You were always guarded, aloft to make sure that you didn't suffer a single scratch. You wanted life's warmth, without burning your fingers. But life always has its revenge in the end. Its blow has be, has fallen on you, all on, all on a sudden. That's why you've, you've collapsed. You only observe the objective reality. You've never ever reached the pure light of truth that lay buried, under the outer shell of reality. You weren't willing to pay the price of burning yourself up totally up in the process of getting there. Like the pain in the heart, there's an aching truth at the center of every real, reality. You never laid your lips to it, to absorb it. Because you did not wish to pay the price of giving up your life to the agony of that poison. Hem, it doesn't help to deny life. You must accept it first and then cut the strings. Otherwise, it sits on your back forever. So what the truth is? What the truth of life is? It's not something, which is answer in the play. It remains, rather, ineluctable pursuit. Right? But it's, it's also a true that, that both these characters, especially Hemakanth, is completely trapped, is completely walled by his own artistic world. His own idealism. Right? And so, he's, he's unable to get out of that idealism, to be able to expose himself, to be able to, take responsibility, to be able to, accept pain and suffering in life. Right? Because to love someone, requires you to be, willing to be vulnerable, to give up your rights, to and, and, and have that willingness to be hurt. Right? So, so he doesn't want to get hurt. Right? So which is why, he, he's, up, up to this point, he remains rather dispassionate and detached man. But, it's only at this point and towards the end of the play that Hemakanth gives up a little bit on his ego. Right? He's, he's actually, open, he opens up finally, when his, sculptures are destroyed. And he's freed of the, of

the idealism of his art. Right? And so he realizes now that, he has to surrender, to the fact of life, which is suffering and pain and hurt.

So even though Lalitha tells him that, he didn't go to the source of the desire, he didn't, he does not, he doesn't know the truth of about desire. What this truth is remains, you know, an endless pursuit for both the characters, in the play. Hemakanth asks her, whether he would have found the truth, through art and she replies, 'Who says so? Where have I found the truth? Perhaps, nobody finds it at any time. But that doesn't mean that we are permitted to do, to deny it. Our ineluctable destiny is to wander in search of it, forever. And that is how, it ends. Because, she feels that she has sinned. She has become a prostitute. And he feels, suddenly feels responsible for her plight. Right? So it's, it's that new sense of responsibility, that new sense of that, that willingness to be hurt, to be vulnerable and in, in, in love is what actually enable Hemakanth to break the walls, that he has created around himself. There is, the, certain dissolving of the autocratic, authoritarianism which separates him from Lalitha, towards the end. So he also becomes vulnerable, his idealism is resolved and Lalitha herself feels that she has been cursed. She, she lives the, the, the abject life of a prostitute. And she, they're both in some sense, it was the end, of course she is, she is, she is in tatters, because the villagers have stoned Hemakanth, until he bleeds. And Lalitha has been humiliated and by, you know, she's had her head shaved and she's in tatters. And so that, the two of them end their life in the mansion. Right? So the mansion itself becomes that space, of self, mutual self destruction. And so it completely collapses under the weight of their own passion, of their, of this very drama, between, the oppressive social norms of society and the kind of, the untrammelled, passions of illicit desire, which you know, in the process of expressing themselves, of transgressing, end up destroying themselves. So there's a kind of self destruction, which, which, is inherent to, this, relentless, pursuit of human pleasure, of this, this objective of human pleasure to, to create, to create the absolute. To be free of all limitations. To be beyond the, the given, the real, the physical. Right? To be able to produce something, which is transcendental and ideal. So that's it. Thank you.